Sale of fighter planes to Pakistan by America

† 283. SHRI MOTILAL VORA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether government are aware that America is going to sell 130 fighter planes to Pakistan;

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto;

(c) whether the Prime Minister had taken up this matter with the American Government during his recent visit to U.S.A.; and

(d) if so, America's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA): (a) and (b) Government has not seen any confirmed reports or official U.S. statement that United States is going to sell 130 fighter aircrafts to Pakistan. Government is, however, aware that the United States has cleared a number of other defence items for sale to Pakistan in the context of Pakistan's involvement in the U.S. led Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, including Aerostat L-88 radar system and spares, used CV-130 aircrafts and Cobra helicopter gunships and spares and components for existing F-16 aircrafts.

(c) and (d) No, Sir. However, Government has conveyed to the United States that it remains conscious of the impact on the U.S. Pakistan military relations on India's security interests. The United States has expressed understanding for our concerns and has also conveyed that it is not considering sale of equipment such as F-16 aircrafts to Pakistan.

Government's stand on proposed US attack on Iraq

284. SHRI AIMADUDDIN AHMED KHAN (DURRU): Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government had made known its stand on the impending proposed attack by US and allies on Iraq: and

(b) if so, Government's stand and response thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) and (b) India has, in international

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

fora and in Parliament, consistently opposed unilateral armed action against Iraq and has called for the resolution of the outstanding issues through political and diplomatic means under the auspices of the United Nations. India welcomes the unanimous adoption of Resolution 1441 by the Security Council on 8th November, which provides for the return of weapons inspectors to Iraq. Subsequently, Iraq has also conveyed its acceptance of Resolution 1441. India believes that sanctions against Iraq should be lifted in tandem with full and effective compliance by Iraq of the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Second road link between Agartala and Dhaka

285. SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India and Bangladesh are going to open a second road link connecting Agartala in Tripura with Dhaka in Bangladesh;

(b)"if so, by when this route would be operational; and

(c) the other details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) Yes. The Governments of India and Bangladesh have signed an Agreement and a Protocol to operate a passenger bus service between Agartala and Dhaka on July 10, 2001 in Dhaka.

(b) and (c) Discussions are underway with Government of Bangladesh to make the bus service operational.

Fishermen detained in Sri Lankan waters

286. SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that 103 fishermen, with their machanised boats, were detained in Sri Lankan waters on the 25th September, 2002;

(b) if so, the details in this regard; and

(c) when they were released?